

# FIRST TALK GUIDE

*The squadron's tool for interviewing  
prospective adult members*

CAPP 52-26  
17 February 2015



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The *CAP First Talk Guide* is a resource squadrons can use when interviewing prospective senior members and cadet sponsor members.

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## Briefing for the Unit Commander

Squadrons screen prospective senior members and cadet sponsor members via an interview process. In the business world, a hiring manager interviews job applicants to decide if the person is a good fit for the organization. That same principle applies to CAP.

Interviews are especially important for cadet protection purposes. This guide includes carefully designed questions to help you make an informed decision about newcomers' membership applications. When you (or your team) conduct interviews, you help ensure that you're "hiring" the people who bring positive attitudes and wholesome life experiences, which can only make CAP safer for cadets.

### Four Steps for Commanders

1. **Establish a Local Interview Procedure.** Ideally, unit commanders delegate the interview task to a unit membership board, but ultimately a single senior (even yourself as commander) could handle this task. However, interviewers should not be related to the newcomer nor be that newcomer's recruiter.
2. **Ensure the Interviews Operate Properly.** Ensure the membership board and/or interviewer reads and understands this *First Talk Guide*, and CAPR 39-2. Interviews should be conducted on an as-needed basis, but not longer than 30 days after the applicant submits a completed CAPF 12 to the unit.
3. **Receive the Interviewer's or Board's Recommendation.** Following the interview, the interviewer or board provides their recommendation, but as commander the final decision on membership is yours.
4. **Act on the Application.** After the interview, decide whether to approve the newcomer's membership application or not. Either sign the completed CAPF 12 and match the newcomer with a mentor to help him or her get started in CAP, or announce your decision to disapprove the application.

### On Disapproving a Membership Application

If you disapprove a membership application, it is recommended that you or a member of your staff communicate that decision to the applicant via email, using the form letter below:

Dear (Applicant's Name)

Thank you for applying for membership in the Civil Air Patrol. (Unit Name) reviewed your application following our standard procedures. Unfortunately, after careful consideration, we've denied your application.

Membership in CAP is a privilege, not a right. All applicants must be accepted by the unit and higher headquarters, and must meet the objective criteria for membership. We do not deny membership on the basis of age, race, color, national origin, disability, religion, or sex.

Thank you for your interest in Civil Air Patrol.

Sincerely,  
(Unit Commander or designee)

### Action at National Headquarters

When you endorse a membership application, NHQ processes it and a criminal background check is conducted before membership is officially approved. See CAPR 39-2 for details.

# Briefing for Interviewers and/or Unit Membership Boards

## Goals of the First Talk Interview

A personal interview provides CAP with an opportunity to meet applicants, determine if they are a good fit for our organization, and ask questions to screen for child sexual abuse risk factors.

The goal of this in-person interview process is to select the best possible people for CAP service and to screen out individuals who have sexually abused youth or are at risk to abuse.

Obviously, this whole interview process is in place primarily because of our Cadet Program. While many adults join CAP with no desire to work with cadets, we screen all prospective senior members because they can nevertheless come into contact with cadets, and because their CAP interests may grow to include frequent interactions with cadets.

## Suggested Process

1. **Use a Trial Period.** Prospective senior members and cadet sponsor members attend a few meetings before formally applying for membership.
2. **Allow the Prospective Member to Apply.** Have applicants submit their completed CAPF 12 application to a designated individual such as the personnel officer.
3. **Explain the Process.** The personnel officer should then explain to the applicant that CAP conducts a brief, in-person interview.
  - Inform the applicant of the date of the interview.
  - Provide the applicant with the “CAP Core Values for Adult Member Applicants” (Attachment 1) and ask them to read it before the interview.
  - Provide the interviewer or Unit Membership Board chair with the completed application.
4. **Interview the Applicant.** Conduct the interview in a quiet, private setting, preferably in an office behind closed doors. With the CAPF 12 in-hand, work through this guide’s interview questions. The applicant may have already answered some of those questions via the CAPF 12; if so, rephrase the prepared questions and simply discuss the information on the form (e.g.: “I see you’re employed at Acme. What do you do there? . . .”)
5. **Make a Recommendation.** After the applicant departs from the interview, consider his or her responses, in light of the “positive answers” and “warning signs” listed throughout this guide, and then make your recommendation to the commander.

## How to Use This Guide

This guide is presented in a script-like format, but the actual interview should be cordial and conversational in tone. Interviewers should use **only** these interview questions, which have been vetted by legal counsel. Interviewers are especially cautioned **not** to ask about nor make membership recommendations based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, or disability.

## Interview Introduction & Discussion Questions



### Opening Remarks from the Interviewer or Unit Membership Board to the Applicant

The purpose of this meeting is to get to know you, learn why you're interested in joining CAP, ensure you understand some basic responsibilities associated with being a CAP member, and, because we have young people involved in CAP through our Cadet Program, learn about your basic attitudes toward interacting with teenagers. Are you a good fit for CAP, and is CAP a good match for you? Every prospective adult volunteer goes through this same process. Our discussion should take about 10 minutes.

**Respect for Privacy.** What is discussed during this membership application interview is confidential. We do not share this information with the other members, only with our squadron commander (*name*) and National Headquarters. However, we do reserve the right to check into your references.

**Scope.** At a later time, the squadron commander (or designee) will answer any program-specific questions you may have as to how you personally can get involved in a mission area. You'll be paired-up with a mentor to help you get started. For now, our purpose is limited to discussing your membership application.

## **Q1. Why do you want to join CAP?**

What's the purpose of this question?

### *Positive Answers:*

To serve the community

To further an interest in aviation or youth or emergency services

For camaraderie with people who share my interests

It's mostly an icebreaker, but applicants with bad attitudes or anger issues may reveal those negative traits in their answer.

### *Warning Signs that may Warrant Follow-up Questions:*

Unsuccessful experiences in other youth-related or civic organizations

Unsuccessful experiences with the military; denied enlistment or dishonorably discharged

To mold cadets by breaking them down and building them up

### *Possible Follow-Up Questions:*

Tell us what you think CAP's purpose is.

Explain how you understand the military-like setting of our program

How'd you come into CAP? Why are you applying for membership with us, versus any number of other worthy organizations?

## **Q2. Do you understand that you must be fingerprinted and that the FBI will use your prints to check your criminal record? Have you ever been arrested?**

What's the purpose of this question?

### *Positive Answers:*

No resistance to the principle of undergoing a criminal background check

Indicates no serious trouble with the law

Our being able to conduct background checks is by itself a valuable deterrent in keeping potential abusers out of CAP.

### *Warning Signs that may Warrant Follow-up Questions:*

Enthusiasm about CAP suddenly backtracks

Prior run-ins with police involve violence, drugs, or a young person

### *Possible Follow-Up Questions:*

If arrested, what can you tell us about the incident? Were you convicted? Did it involve violence? Did it involve illegal drugs? How long ago did the event take place?

**Q3. Do you have any hobbies or personal interests? What do you currently do with your free time?**

What's the purpose of this question?

***Positive Answers:***

Mentions any number of life experiences, which show he or she is living successfully as an independent adult

Is involved in at least a few age-appropriate friendships, outside the family, where someone knows him or her well enough to provide a positive reference

This is another icebreaker, but we're also trying to determine if the applicant has mature, adult relationships – not just relationships with youth.

***Warning Signs that may Warrant Follow-up Questions:***

No known hobbies or pastimes, suggesting an inability to manage the normal adult task of navigating the world and finding ways to achieve personal happiness

No known friendships outside the immediate family or with people of his or her own age group, suggesting an inability to apply normal social skills and interact with peers

***Possible Follow-Up Questions:***

We get a lot of applicants who have free time and a desire to serve, but everybody has some hobbies already. What do you do with your spare time?

**Q4. What do you do for a living? How long have you been employed there? What did you do before that?**

What's the purpose of this question?

***Positive Answers:***

Anything indicating a normal work history or normal ability to contribute to society as a responsible, independent adult citizen

Anything demonstrating positive, effective people skills one would expect to see in a responsible adult

This question explores the applicant's sense of personal responsibility. It's also an opportunity to gauge his or her people skills and leadership philosophies, to see if they are consistent with our Core Values.

***Warning Signs that may Warrant Follow-up Questions:***

Inability to hold a job - a checkered work history

(Note: prospective members do **not** need to be employed; some individuals have good reason for not being actively employed in the workforce.)

Negative, pessimistic attitudes

Overly-authoritarian leadership style

Inability to work well with others, especially in a diverse organization

General unwillingness to follow the directions of others

***Possible Follow-Up Questions:***

Do you get along with your boss? Are you receptive toward taking directions? Can you tell us of a time you disagreed with your boss? How did you handle it?

If you're a boss, how would you describe your leadership style? Can you tell us of a time you had to manage a difficult personnel matter? How did you handle it?



**Q5a. Do you have any prior experience with CAP? With other civic organizations? Could another organization give you a reference?**

***Positive Answers:***

Positive, successful experiences with CAP or other organizations

Evidence of ties to the community; positive, successful relationships with neighbors or coworkers

No hesitation or wariness about CAP talking with officials in other civic organizations about his or her experiences there

***Warning Signs that may Warrant Follow-up Questions:***

Negative experiences with CAP or other organizations; disciplinary actions; purportedly voluntary resignation from CAP or another organization

Chronic wandering from one civic group to another

Shows hesitation or wariness about CAP talking with officials in other civic organizations about his or her experiences there

***Possible Follow-Up Questions:***

Are you still associated with the other youth or service organizations?

Why did you leave the other organization? Did you leave on good terms? If we contact them, will they provide a good reference? Have you ever been subject to disciplinary action in that other youth or service organization?

**Q5b. For Applicants Indicating No Prior CAP Involvement  
So, our national headquarters won't have a record of your being a former member or your applying for membership before now?**

***Positive Answers:***

Affirms earlier claim of having no prior CAP involvement

***Warning Signs that may Warrant Follow-up Questions:***

Has previously attempted to join CAP but did not follow-through

Failed to fully disclose prior membership

***Possible Follow-Up Questions:***

Help us understand. Moments ago you said you had no prior experience with CAP, but now you say you do? Why the apparent disconnect?

What's the purpose of this question?

This is a critical question. If an applicant has prior experience in Scouting, for example, why did he or she leave that organization? Is the applicant fleeing from bad conduct and loss of trustworthiness?

What's the purpose of this question?

Good members are welcome back, but if the applicant is trying to hide a negative history with CAP, that in itself is cause for concern.

**Q5c. Is there anyone [in the other civic group] who would not give you a good reference, particularly in working with youth? Why?**

***Positive Answers:***

Willingness for anybody in the other group to be contacted for a reference check

Expresses confidence in his or her personal reputation

***Warning Signs that may Warrant Follow-up Questions:***

Wariness about CAP contacting certain individuals

***Possible Follow-Up Questions:***

Why would that person not give you a good reference? Tell us more about that relationship, their ill feelings toward you.

Ask for more specifics about the situation.

What's the purpose of this question?

If the applicant is trying to hide a negative history with the other group, this question will help bring that fact to light.

**Q5d. For Applicants Indicating That Nobody Would Give a Negative Reference So, you're comfortable with us just calling that organization and speaking to one of the officers / managers about your experience with them?**

***Positive Answers:***

Willingness for anybody in the other group to be contacted for a reference check

***Warning Signs that may Warrant Follow-up Questions:***

Change in attitude; now wary about CAP contacting certain individuals

***Possible Follow-Up Questions:***

Why would that person not give you a good reference? Tell us more about that relationship, their ill feelings toward you.

What's the purpose of this question?

This question shows persistence on CAP's part, thereby helping establish in the applicant's mind our seriousness toward youth safety overall.

**Q6. We try hard to make our expectations clear through written regulations. What would you do if you came across a regulation that you didn't like?**

What's the purpose of this question?

If applicants are highly independent, they might not fit well in CAP's structured environment.

***Positive Answers:***

General willingness to abide by CAP regulations

Indicates some degree of faith in CAP having valid reasons for creating rules and regulations

Natural reflex is to talk with local leaders when displeased with CAP rules

***Warning Signs that may Warrant Follow-up Questions:***

Dismissive of need for rules and regulations; contemptuous of authority

***Possible Follow-Up Questions:***

We're all adults and bring some great life experiences to CAP. How do you think you'll feel and act being "the new guy"?

Has your maverick-like attitude ever gotten you into trouble?

Can you tell us about a recent experience where you were proven wrong or you changed your mind about a long-held belief?

**Q7a. Cadet- and Aerospace-Focused Applicants:**  
**Do you have any experience teaching or mentoring young people?**

***Positive Answers:***

Fulfilled prior leadership roles in a positive way that was enjoyable for all involved

Awareness that working with teens requires patience and understanding

Note: Prior experience is preferred, but not necessary if willing to learn

***Warning Signs that may Warrant Follow-up Questions:***

Leadership methods in the past were not successful, caused friction, hurt feelings

Not enough positive, successful life experiences of his or her own as an adult to interact with youth as a mature leader

Expressing a negative, hazing-prone leadership style

Emphasis on wanting one-on-one contact

Suggestion that applicant is joining to recruit cadets into another activity (part-time job, church group, unofficial hiking club, etc.)

***Possible Follow-Up Questions:***

What qualifies you to be a role model / instructor in a youth program?

What life experiences do you have that you think would be helpful in working with teens?

**What's the purpose of this question?**

There's a place for everyone in CAP, if they have a good attitude, but it is reasonable to expect from an applicant interested in serving in a leadership role over youth some mentoring or teaching experience. Would you "hire" this person to lead youth and take responsibility for the youths' welfare?

**Q7b. Cadet- and Aerospace-Focused Applicants:**

**What age / gender do you most want to work with? How do you feel about working with youth who are (older, younger, different gender)?**

**Positive Answers:**

Willingness to work with cadet-aged youth of either gender

Having a special interest in a certain age group or gender when that special interest is understandable (e.g. a middle school teacher prefers working with younger cadets)

Up-front about lack of interest in working with cadets, due to an ES or senior focus

**Warning Signs that may Warrant Follow-up Questions:**

Strong *fixation* about a particular age group or gender (e.g. having absolutely no interest in working with youth over age 13)

Willingness to work with cadets of a certain age or gender, but not cadets who are a couple years older/younger, or of the other gender

**Possible Follow-Up Questions:**

Why are you interested in working with that age / gender? Do you have prior experience with that group, perhaps as a teacher at that grade level? Kids of your own at that same age?

Why are you less interested in working with cadets of other age groups? Would you be unwilling to work with those other cadet ages, the other gender?

What's the purpose of this question?

This is a critical question. If an application seems fixated on one age or gender, be wary. Asking follow-up questions about why an applicant has a strong preference can help you determine if there is cause for concern. It may be that he or she has special experience with that age group.

**Q7c. Emergency Services-Focused Applicants**

**What makes you a good candidate for assisting in our humanitarian missions?**

**Positive Answers:**

Any number of positive, wholesome personal qualities

## Hypothetical Situations

We're going to present a couple hypothetical situations involving cadets. You don't necessarily need to know CAP's in-house rules to respond. Please, simply think about the situation and tell us what you personally would do in response to that situation.

**H1. An older cadet, who is highly knowledgeable and appears to be a great asset to the unit, somehow feels you've interfered with a class he was teaching, so he calls you an "ass" and tells you to "get lost." What do you do?**

**H2. You see an older cadet yelling at another cadet, getting right up in the younger cadet's face as the younger cadet is standing at attention. What, if anything, do you do?**

*Positive Answers:*

Any response that is wholesome and non-abusive and includes a basic recognition of normal adult responsibility

*Warning Signs that may Warrant Follow-up Questions:*

Any response that fails to acknowledge a normal adult responsibility . . . this is an opportunity for the potential member to inadvertently reveal negative attitudes toward youth and leadership.

**End here if you are satisfied by positive answers. Continue on if you heard replies that concern you.**

**H3. Another adult CAP member mentions that he and a cadet who is not related to him are going together to see a movie they're both interested in.**

**H4. You hear through the grapevine that another adult CAP member shared some "R-rated" marching cadences with some of the older cadets.**

*Positive Answers:*

Any response that is wholesome and non-abusive and includes a basic recognition of normal adult responsibility

*Warning Signs that may Warrant Follow-up Questions:*

Any response that fails to acknowledge a normal adult responsibility . . . this is an opportunity for the potential member to inadvertently reveal negative attitudes toward youth and leadership.

**What's the purpose of these situational questions?**

We have created scenarios that involve adults' responsibilities to lead youth, boundary issues, and general adult / youth interactions.

Applicants should have a basic sense of CAP's Cadet Protection Policy already through the "CAP Core Values for Adult Member Applicants" reading.

Be concerned if applicants disregard the organization's policies and procedures or if their responses are far off the mark.

# CAP Core Values

## *Reading for Adult Member Applicants*

Thank you for applying for membership in Civil Air Patrol. Please take a few moments to read this brief statement about our missions, values, and expectations. The Unit Membership Board will meet with you soon to discuss your application, in light of the basic principles listed below.

### **CAP's Missions**

- Aerospace** Aviation, space, and technology are interests that CAP members hold in common. One of our missions is to provide opportunities for our members and the public at large to learn more about this exciting field.
- Cadets** Today's cadets are tomorrow's aerospace leaders. Through our Cadet Program, CAP transforms youth aged 12 to 20 into responsible citizens.
- Emergency Services** We perform humanitarian missions, serving our communities in disaster relief, search and rescue, organ transport, radio communications, and in numerous other ways.

### **Core Values**

- Our Core Values are moral signposts that we use to guide us in every decision, in every action we perform.
- Integrity** Being honest and willing to abide by our regulations and safety protocols is the price of admission to CAP.
- Volunteer Service** We are unpaid professionals who welcome newcomers willing to contribute their time and talents to our important work.
- Excellence** Our organization and its individual members are open to new ideas because we want to find the best ways to serve the community.
- Respect** There is something for everyone in CAP, so we welcome everyone, give one another the benefit of the doubt, put aside personal differences, and try hard to get along and have fun.

### **Youth Protection**

- Zero Tolerance** The Cadet Program provides opportunities for positive, age-appropriate challenge. We do not tolerate physical, sexual, or emotional abuse in CAP. All CAP adult members are expected to be positive role models, even if they rarely interact with cadets.
- Supervision** We use "two deep leadership." Every cadet activity is supervised by at least two screened and trained adult members. We avoid unnecessary one-on-one conduct by not meeting with cadets behind closed doors, and if driving cadets (other than one's own children), having a third person in the vehicle. Parents are always welcome to visit our activities; we have no "secret" meetings.
- Professionalism** Fraternization between senior members and cadets is always prohibited, even if the cadet has reached the age of majority.
- Training** You'll learn more about these principles during the "Cadet Protection Basic Course," shortly after you join.

### **Air Force Affiliation**

CAP is both a private, non-profit corporation chartered by the U.S. Congress, and an auxiliary of the U.S. Air Force, when performing missions tasked to us by them. Consequently, we have a special responsibility to honor the public's trust in us. A seriousness of purpose guides our work in all mission areas.

